

Message Text

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15

ACTION INT-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 EB-11 COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-09

NSAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 /041 W
----- 129523

R 230445 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3330
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 3307

FOR BUMINES -- WILLIAM WOOD

E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: EMIN IN
SUBJECT: JITPUR COAL MINE DISASTER

REF: A) COMMERCIAL TELEGRAM, WOOD TO SWEETWOOD; MARCH 21, 1973
B) NEW DELHI 9040, JULY 20, 1972

1. THE GOVERNMENT- OWNED BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED' S
JITPUR COLLIERY AT NOONOIDIH, NEAR DHANBAD, BIHAR, SUFFERED
SERIES OF UNDERGROUND EXPLOSIONS SUNDAY MARCH 18. INITIAL
EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE AT 2000 HOURS AT LEVEL OF 1,500 FEET BELOW
SURFACE IN A CURRENTLY- OPERATED WORKING PLACE. SEVERE
ACCUMULATION
OF METHANE GAS HAS BEEN REPORTED AS PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF DISASTER.
2. JITPUR MINE IS ONE OF EASTERN INDIA' S LARGEST SINGLE
UNDERGROUND COAL MINES, WITH AVERAGE DAILY OUTPUT OF 1,150
METRIC TONS. THE MINE IS CAPTIVE SUPPLIER OF COKING COAL TO
PUBLIC SECTOR INDIAN IRON AND STEEL COMPANY' S (IISCO)
BURNPUR, WEST BENGAL, PLANT. (IISCO WAS NATIONALIZED BY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN JULY 1972; REF B.) MINABLE SEAMS AVERAGE
6-8 FEET, ARE FLAT- LYING, AND ARE MINED BY BOTH HAND AND
MECHANIZED METHODS. THIS MINE NORMALLY OPERATES THREE SHIFTS
DAILY, WITH ABOUT 630 MEN UNDERGROUND PER SHIFT. TOTAL MINE
EMPLOYMENT: 2,700 SURFACE AND UNDERGROUND. AT TIME OF
EXPLOSION (AN INDIAN HOLIDAY), 102 MEN WERE ON DUTY, REPORTEDLY
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ASSIGNED ONLY TO UNDERGROUND MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR. OF THIS TOTAL, LATEST UNCONFIRMED REPORTS STATE THAT 16 WORKERS HAD RETURNED TO SURFACE MINUTES BEFORE EXPLOSION, 39 WERE RESCUED AFTER EXPLOSION, AND 47 WERE KILLED.

3. GOI ANNOUNCED MARCH 21 THAT DIRECTOR- GENERAL, MINES SAFETY, HAS INITIATED FULL SCALE INVESTIGATION. EMBASSY WILL REPORT PERTINENT DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY OCCUR, AND WILL TRANSMIT OFFICIAL GOI REPORT ON DISASTER WHEN AVAILABLE. MOYNIHAN

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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